

Archives and special collections

A guide to resources on the Web

by Tanya Zanish-Belcher

Digital access and the Web have altered the landscape of archives and special collections permanently and allowed increasing numbers of users to locate and access archives and other rare materials. Throughout history, documents, manuscripts, and rare books were reserved for an in-house elite number of scholars. Now there are no limits, except time and expense, on primary resources being made available electronically worldwide.

This change in perspective has also affected those with the responsibility of managing special collections and archives, resulting in many new opportunities for access to materials all over the world, connectivity and communication with other repositories, access to professional archival resources, and new methods of outreach to the public. This outreach includes an increased sharing of collection information, digital documents, and virtual exhibits with a wide variety of researchers. Digital access also invites new generations, such as K–12 students and National History Day participants, to explore one-of-a-kind resources that were formerly hidden away.

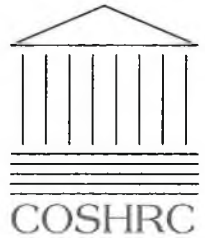
General resources for archives and special collections

- **Archivists' Daybook.** Sponsored by the Society of Southwest Archivists, this Web site consists of an in-depth calendar of events re-

lating to archives from 2003 through 2007. Included are related conference dates and locations, workshops, grant information, and historical tidbits of information concerning our archival past. *Access:* <http://www.tulane.edu/~lmiller/Daybook.html>.

- **Council for State Records Coordinators (COSHRC).** COSHRC, sponsor of the report "Connecting the Archival Community," has targeted ways the archival community could communicate and collaborate especially in the area of education. This Web site provides a wide variety of information relevant to both archivists and nonarchivists, including links to the Archives Resource Center (to be redesigned and renamed this year). The Resource Center provides links to technical information regarding education, how to use primary resources, and the status of state records programs, as well as professional field links to glossaries, resource directories, and archival organizations. *Access:* <http://www.coshrc.org/index.html>.

- **Ready, 'Net, Go! Archival Internet Resources.** As noted in its introduction, this Web site is an archival "meta index," or index of archival indexes, by which the user can



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reach major indexes, lists, and databases of archival resources. Of great value for any user who needs an overview, there are links to master lists of archives, tools such as collection guides and other Web resources, archival catalogs on the Web, and guides to professional development in the archival profession. *Access:* <http://www.tulane.edu/~lmliller/ArchivesResources.html>.

Professional associations

- **Society of American Archivists (SAA).** Founded in 1936, SAA is North America's oldest and largest national archival professional association of 3,400 members. The Web site contains an employment bulletin, a publications catalog, annual meeting information, and opportunities for continuing education.



In addition, the Web site's Education Section lists the library and history programs that provide training in archives in the United States and Canada. *Access:* <http://www.archivists.org/>.

- **ACRL's Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS).** For anyone who works with manuscripts or rare books, the RBMS Web site provides news of interest, conference information, memberships and committees, standards and guidelines, and links to related groups. Of particular interest are the standards and guidelines, security information, and "What is a Rare Book?" *Access:* <http://www.rbms.nd.edu/>.

- **A Directory of Regional, State, and Local Archival Organizations in the United States.** This directory contains listings for the strong regional archival organizations, as well as state and local organizations. *Access:* <http://sophia.smith.edu/~pnelson/regionals/>.

Other related professional organizations

- **Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA).** AMIA is a rapidly growing organization of those working directly with archival motion picture film and video. Interest groups with links on the Web site include those who digitize film and video. In addition, there

is also ordering information for AMIA's *Compendium of Moving Image Cataloging Practice*, as well as links for cataloging examples from the participating repositories. *Access:* <http://www.amianet.org/>.

- **Association for Information Management Professionals (ARMA International).** ARMA focuses on records management issues, and their Web site states, "Today's information management professionals must possess content skills, an understanding of how and why data is created, who should have access to it, and when it should be destroyed." There are links to legislative and regulatory standards, membership information, and frequently asked questions. *Access:* [http://www.ama.org/](http://www.arma.org/).

- **National Council on Public History.** The National Council on Public History Web site has links to membership information, conference materials, publications that are available, and an online newsletter with updates of interest in the field of public history. *Access:* <http://ncph.org/>.

- **Oral History Association (OHA).** Many archivists and special collections staff have the responsibility of creating and preserving oral histories. While including regular organizational information, such as conference materials, membership, electronic list details, and available publications, OHA's Web site also contains links to other oral history Web sites as well as basic guidelines and standards for conducting oral histories. *Access:* <http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/>.

Continuing education

- **The Archivist's Toolkit (Archives Association of British Columbia).** "Designed as a community resource for use by those working primarily in small and medium-sized archives," the Archivist's Toolkit provides a wide range of links to areas of interest, such as "Establishing an Archives," "Arrangement and Description," and "Appraisal and Accessioning." *Access:* <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/toolkit.html>.

- **Introduction to Archival Organization and Description: Access to Cultural Heritage (The Archivist's Primer).** This Web site gives an excellent overview of the archives profession and is well worth a visit by anyone interested in the topic. The table of contents details the subject areas, such as ar-

chival theory, standards, and workflow, which includes a description of collection processing, a tutorial that follows an archivist through his or her work, and resources for further reading. *Access:* <http://www.schistory.org/getty/>.

• **Northeast Document Conservation Center: Preservation 101.** This online course provides articles and readings on the practice of preservation, from practical storage matters to disaster planning. The Web site also includes a glossary, care and handling guidelines, and sources for further reading. *Access:* <http://www.nedcc.org/p101cs/p101wel.htm>.

• **Rare Book School (University of Virginia).** Rare Book School, located at the University of Virginia, is a unique opportunity for continuing education in the history of printing, the care of rare books, bibliographic cataloging, bookbinding structures, and even the provision of digital images and Encoded Archival Description (EAD). This Web site provides application and financial aid information, available courses, evaluations from past courses, and course reading lists. *Access:* <http://www.virginia.edu/oldbooks/>.

Electronic lists

• **Archives Listserv.** This unmoderated electronic list is sponsored by Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) and is open to participants. The subjects vary widely, but include discussions of basic and in-depth archival questions, such as the calculation of linear footage for archival records, job announcements, and ethical questions. The archives digest is also available at the Web site, which allows visitors to examine previous postings by subject. *Access:* <http://listserv.muohio.edu/archives/archives.html>.

• **RBMS.** The RBMS list is devoted to ACRL's Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS). The RBMS list is unmoderated and membership in the list is open to anyone who wishes to join. *Access:* http://www.rbms.nd.edu/manualelectronic_communications.shtml#listserv.

• **ExLibris.** The ExLibris electronic list is a news and discussion group for those interested in and working with manuscripts, rare books, and special collections. *Access:* <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byform/mailling-lists/exlibris/>.

Catalogs and guides for archives and special collections

• **Archives USA.** ArchivesUSA provides access to more than 130,000 archival collections. The catalog includes items in National Union Catalog Manuscript Collections from 1959 (searchable in electronic form), nearly 5,000 direct links to finding aids for archives collections, collections descriptions, and repository information. *Access:* <http://archives.chadwyck.com/>.

• **Repository Listing of Primary Sources in the U.S.** A listing for repositories, there are over 5,000 Web sites in this list focusing on manuscripts, archives, rare books, historical photographs, and other primary sources for the research scholar. It is organized geographically by region and by state. *Access:* <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html>.

• **Library and Archival Exhibitions on the Web (Smithsonian Institute).** This Web site provides links to online exhibits created by libraries and archival repositories. There is a search engine available that allows users to search by exhibit title, institution, or subject terms. *Access:* <http://www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/Online-Exhibitions/>.

• **UNESCO Archives Portal: An International Gateway to Information for Archivists and Archives Users.** This Web site currently contains 4,781 links to archival repositories, organized by subjects such as architecture, university archives, municipal, military, and family. Within these categories, the entries are then organized by country and city. As research becomes increasingly international, this Web site will provide access to worldwide users. *Access:* http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_archives/pages/Archives/.

Of special interest

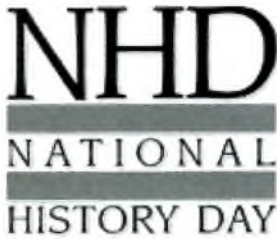
• **ARL Collections Program—Special Collections.** The Association of Research Libraries' Web site has several links of interest related to special collections, including a task force, a 1998 survey, and a 2001 symposium. *Access:* <http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/index.html>.

• **COOL: Conservation OnLine.** One duty of those responsible for archives and special collections is the consideration of preservation in all aspects of archival work. From appropriate storage and climate control, to rec-

ommendations for conservation work, preservation is an integral component of archival work. The COOL Web site provides links to organizations, research work, and topics such as copyright, continuing education, digital preservation, disaster planning, environmental controls, and suppliers. *Access:* <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/>.

• **Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).** This organization and its Web site provide much valuable and needed information for those working with unique primary sources. Its sponsored publications (many available online) focus on making collections available to users, special preservation issues, and digital issues. CLIR's latest report focused on the state of preservation programs in college and research libraries in the United States and their other reports have focused on digitizing research collections. *Access:* <http://www.clir.org/>.

• **National History Day.** Another benefit of the new public relations component of archives and special collections is the increasing use by K-12 visitors. Although these patrons will require time and attention from the archivist, this new generation of users sees the value of primary documents. The Web site for



National History Day details the contest and themes, and also provides links for both teachers and students. Each state has a coordinator, and it is to the advantage of every repository to become involved in some small way, even by simply providing selected digital images on a Web page or reproductions of original documents for students to use. *Access:* <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>.

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Journals

• **American Archivist.** This semiannual journal, published by the Society of American Archivists, contains scholarly articles on archival theory, case studies, book reviews, and the minutes of SAA Council meetings. *Access:* <http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/index.asp>.

• **Archival Issues: The Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference.** *Archival Issues*, published twice a year, focuses on many

aspects of the archival and information professions. First-time authors are encouraged to submit articles. Abstracts and contents are available in PDF form from the Web site of the Midwest Archives Conference, and there are currently plans underway to provide the journal online. *Access:* <http://www.midwestarchives.org/>.

• **Archivaria.** The Association of Canadian Archivists publishes *Archivaria*, which focuses on Canadian and international archives. Solicited articles can include studies of documentation, theoretical discussions, communication issues among archivists, and book and exhibition reviews. *Access:* <http://archivists.ca/publicat/archivar/>.

• **Journal of Archival Organization.** This new Haworth-published quarterly journal contains articles relating to all aspects of arrangement and description, the processing of collections, and how access is provided for users. There will be a special emphasis on emerging technologies, including digitization and how it will impact archives as a whole. *Access:* <http://www.haworthpressinc.com/store/product.asp?sku=J201>.

• **Library and Archival Security.** This Haworth-published journal provides much-needed discussion and overview of security issues in libraries and archives, such as "physical security; data and communications security; relevant legislation; disaster preparedness and recovery; and studies of related social, legal, and ethical issues." *Access:* <http://www.haworthpressinc.com/store/product.asp?sku=J114>.

• **RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage.** *RBM*, formerly known as *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship*, is published by ACRL. There are articles on special collections as a part of our cultural heritage, collaboration within the profession, the impact of digital technologies, and collection development. *Access:* <http://www.ala.org/acrl/rbmltxt.html>. ■

More on archives and special collections

See the expanded article on the Web at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/resmarch03.html>.

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